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shah abdul latif

seeking the beloved

TRANSLATED BY ANJU MAKHIJA & HARI DILGIR



SHAH ABDUL LATIF SEEKING THE BELOVED

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**SHAH ABDUL LATIF
SEEKING THE BELOVED**

Translated from the Sindhi
by Anju Makhija and Hari Dilgir



For Vishendevi Narayandas



KATHA

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SEEKING THE BELOVED THE POETRY OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF

SEEKING THE BELOVED presents selected verse from the *Shah Jo Risalo*¹ of Shah Abdul Latif of Bhitai, the celebrated sixteenth century sufi poet. This is the first comprehensive translation to appear in English from India.

Latif's unique treatment and allegorical interpretations of common folk tales, like Sasui-Punhoon, are truly relevant in today's atmosphere of religious strife. The sufis, as is known, were great integrators and Latif's poetry draws freely from both Islamic and Vedantic traditions.

Latif's verse, which is heard frequently in the voices of well-known singers, finds renewed creative energy in this translation. This volume includes an introduction by the renowned sufi scholar Padmashree Dr Motilal Jotwani.

¹ The compiled verses of Shah Abdul Latif are called *Risalo*, which means message. These verses are recorded from the collection of verses known as *Ganj*, which is preserved at the mausoleum of the saint-poet.

INTRODUCTION

Dr Motilal Jotwani

Shah Abdul Latif (1689-1752) has been aptly called the people's poet, revered alike by the elite and the common folk. He remains one of the greatest sufi poets in history along with Rumi (1207-1273) and Mir Dard (1721-1785). Often chanted in spiritual séances, Latif's poems have an immediate emotional appeal. They are about love for humanity and depict the seeker's direct relationship with the Supreme instead of a particular religious group looking for scriptural instructions and injunctions.

His verses are recited today as they have been for more than two hundred and fifty years. An Urs is held annually at Bhitshah in Sindh, Pakistan, where the poet spent the final years of his life and was later buried in a beautiful mausoleum. His disciples and followers from all over the world gather to celebrate and sing his verse.

Shah Abdul Latif was born in Hala, Sindh, in a notable Sayyid family. He was of average height, with a strong build, possessing gentle manners. His dress code was simple like a sanyasi. Some of his clothes are preserved in Bhitshah to this day.

The poet's lifetime witnessed many historical events, the major being the transfer of power from the Mughal to the Kalhoro rule; but Shah Abdul Latif had little

interest in politics. His life was poetry personified and his poetry recorded his experiences: both constituting an organic whole. He authored a major work, *Shah Jo Risalo* which, according to most sources has thirty surs. It can be described as one long wail of firaq or separation from God. The *Risalo* is not a philosophical treatise like the Upanishads, but it does propound the doctrine of advaita or non-dualism.

As the story goes, Latif's disciples put together a volume from memorized verses and showed it to him. The poet, it is said, threw it into the lake for fear of being misunderstood. But later, he himself ensured that the verses were recompiled properly. The *Risalo* was preserved at the mausoleum of the saint-poet in 1754. Later, the scholar, Ernest Trumpp, published it in Germany in 1866. Subsequently, there was a mausoleum edition which has been in the British museum since 1844. Dr HM Gurbaxani, Dr HT Sorley, Kalyan Advani and Dr Annemarie Schimmel were among the renowned scholars who have worked on interpretations of the *Risalo*. Since then, others have written innumerable books on Latif, and a few translations have also been done in Pakistan. This volume by Hari Dilgir and Anju Makhija represents the first poetic transcreation of Latif's selected work in English in India.

~

Shah Abdul Latif was part of the bhakti movement which had a major impact in Sindh through the spread of Guru Nanak's teachings. Qazi Qadan, Shah Karim and Sachal Sarmast were some of the other well-known poets belonging to this tradition.

Indian sufism uses the imagery of romantic and conjugal love to depict the bond between God and man. This has been used as the basic metaphor for understanding spiritual life. Kabir says,

*Rama is my husband,
I am his little bride.*

Like Kabir, Shah Latif assumes the role of the female protagonist of popular folk tales. He becomes Sasui, Moomal, Sohini and experiences the pangs of separation from God. Punhoon, Rano and Mehar personify beauty in his poetry.

It was in Shah Latif's poetry that Indian sufism, which drew its inspiration from the Vedanta, found full expression. Like Bhakti Yoga, it was based on complete surrender to God with the ultimate goal of union. All forms of dogma and authority were rejected. The sufi poets stood for sartorial freedom, and used the language of the masses.

The mystical union of man with God is depicted by Latif allegorically in many surs. In the tale of Sasui-Punhoon, the two come together after Sasui, the seeker,

has crossed innumerable hurdles in search of her lover. Finally, she tastes the universal essence of love. Latif speaks to us in Sasui's voice,

*As I turned inwards and conversed with my soul,
there was no mountain to surpass,
no Punhoon to look for,
I myself became Punhoon!
Only as Sasui
did I experience grief.*

Sasui reaches a state where Ketch, Punhoon's native place, and Bhambore, her own village, are reconciled as the One Original Abode.

Realization is possible only by becoming one with the object of realization. In this case knowledge is not in the form, "I know this" but "I am this." Realization is an intimate knowledge in the form of, "I am Brahma" or "I am Huqq." If one living does not know the self, then there is endless misery in the form of birth, old age and death. One who "dies" before death, or while alive, and gives no consideration to the external body, becomes liberated. Shah Abdul Latif says,

*Those who die before death,
never will be destroyed by dying.*

In the tale of Moomal-Rano, Moomal, the seeker, satisfies her desire of being with her lover by sleeping with

her sister, who is clad in a man's attire. When Rano comes to her palace, he mistakes her sister for a man and leaves abruptly. Moomal comes to know of this, and exclaims, "I shall die without you." After much remorse and introspection her mind eventually becomes still, like the flame of a lamp by which she waits for her true self to emerge.

Liberation, another name for realization, comes to Moomal now. She is free from the bondage of body and mind; it is a stage of non-distinction. She sees everything in herself and herself in everything. She is the entire world and the entire world is her:

Where should I drive the camel?

All around is His glory;

Kaak's palace is within me!

There is nothing but peace, nothing but Rano everywhere. Moomal achieves a union without beginning or end. Moomal gives up attachment with her "person," conscious of Rano in herself and thus realizes Turiya or the Truth, and Shanti.

In the allegorical tale of Sohini-Mehar, Sohini, the seeker, undergoes many hardships in order to meet her lover, Mehar. Their love faces much community opposition. Every night Sohini crosses a mighty river with the help of a baked pot to meet him on the opposite bank. The two are finally united in death. Sohini becomes one with Mehar,

one with God, allegorically. The term istighraq defines her state. Like Mansur, she is no more the abd, servant, she is Allah herself. One who says anna l'abd, I am the servant of God, supposes duality – the existence of God and his own. But he who says ana l-Huqq, I am the Truth, affirms the Oneness of existence. Sohini says:

*If you were to see Mehar's face but once,
you would no longer sleep comfortably
beside your husband.
You would pick up the jar,
and plunge into the river!*

The Upanishads refer to the nature of the Absolute as neti, not this. The Absolute is undefinable. This is the essence of advaita, the philosophy of non-dualism, propounded by Sankaracharya.

~

In Shah Latif's Sur *Ramkali*, which is inspired by the lives of yogis, shanti or the experienced peace is inexpressible.

*Where there is no heaven, no trace of earth,
where the moon and the sun neither rise, nor descend,
that far the yogis have set their tryst with the Supreme.
They see the Lord in Nothingness.*

This stage is similar to the one in Kath Upanishad:

*Where neither sun, moon, nor stars shine,
Where lightning does not strike.*

Shah Latif longs for the constant company of the yogis in whom he sees divine qualities, and with whom he travelled far and wide in India.

*Take advantage of their presence,
be with them and enrich your experience,
soon they'll go on a journey to distant lands,
leave this world of pleasures and reach the holy Ganga.*

Sur Ramkali makes it clear that a part of Shah Latif's heritage is derived from the traditions of the Nath sampradaya. However, Latif did not favour mere physical practice of sadhana without bhakti. As such, there is no reference in his poetry to the entire method of penance practiced by the Nath panthis. His is the bhavatmak rahasyavada, mysticism with devotion as its basis, and not the sadhanatmak, that is mysticism based on yogic postures. For Latif, yogis are spiritual beings, who stay away from physical pleasures. They hear the subtle sound pervading the universe, the non-struck sound or the Anahata nada,

*They wear loin cloth and need no ablutions,
they hear the subtle call
that sounded before the advent of Islam.
They sever all ties and meet their guide, Gorakhnath.*

The Anahata nada, or sabda, in its ultimate sense is like the sound Om. The mula mantra of the Jap-Ji by Guru Nanak, who is popularly described as a guru of the Hindus and a pir of the Muslims, opens with the highest mystical syllables, Ek Omkar Sat-Nam, Kartar and Purkha. Shah Latif also says:

*Constantly contemplate on these words,
the cure for all your misery:
Keep meem in your mind
and put alif before it.*

The reference here is to both Om, which when written in the Arabic script, begins with the letter alif and ends with the meem and Muhammad – after – Allah (meem refers to Muhammad, alif to Allah).

Shah Latif had stayed in the company of the wandering yogis, believing in the unity of being. Sankaracharya's advaita and the sufi's Wahdah al-wujud are strikingly similar in their metaphysical quest.

~

Shah Latif was attracted to spiritual life from his childhood. Contemplative by nature, he shunned worldly comforts and remained more or less in isolation. It is said that when he was taught the alphabet at the age of six, he refused to go beyond the alif which stands for Allah.

Latif followed his father, Sayyid Shah Habib's advice and

rose to be a learned man of his times. He had mastery over his mother tongue, Sindhi, and also knew Arabic, Persian and Hindi along with other languages. The *Risalo* shows that he had studied the Quran and Vedantic traditions and internalized them through personal observation and experiences. Quran in Arabic, Rumi's *Mathnavi* in Persian and Shah Abdul Karim's baits, in Sindhi were Latif's constant companions.

When Latif was about twenty, he visited the ailing daughter of Mirza Mughal Beg who was a descendant of Chengiz Khan. Latif was struck by the young woman's beauty, and holding her little finger said, "one whose finger is in Sayyid's hand need fear no fall."

Mirza Mughal Beg did not approve of the young poet's words, and forced the Sayyids to leave Kotri and relocate to Haweli.

This separation made Shah Latif restless. One day, he left home without informing his parents, and joined a group of yogis and sanyasis and travelled with them for three years, through Sindh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. This exposure widened his outlook and understanding of Hinduism. The insight he gained helped him to create poetry inspired by the immortal characters of Sasui, Marui, Sohini and other folk heroines. What Sasui experiences while plodding through the hot sands of the Thar was a part of Latif's own journey.

When Shah Latif was twenty three, Mirza Mughal Beg lost his life in an armed encounter with robbers. The women of the family attributed this misfortune to the displeasure of the Sayyids. They offered Mirza's daughter's hand to Latif and thus he won her in the end.

Latif's life thereafter was simple and was spent mainly in contemplation and poetry. People would come from distant places to listen to him. Latif built an entire village with his disciples on a sandhill in Bhitai, where he spent the rest of his days with his family.

Before his death in 1752, he confined himself in an underground room for about three weeks and spent all his time in prayers. When he came out, he bathed and covered himself with a white sheet and asked his disciples to play music. After three days they discovered that Latif had left his body. He was buried at the same place where his mausoleum still stands.

~

Latif's renderings reflected his environment: the landscape of Sindh, which is now part of Pakistan. Deserts, sand dunes, trees and flowers; falcons, vultures, ducks, cuckoos, partridges and a host of other local motifs appear in *Risalo*, sometimes in their natural hues and occasionally in the poet's imaginative representations.

Latif's poetry was considered non-metrical according

to rigid canonical standards. Some even called it “rustic.” Latif was a folk-poet, who did not limit himself to the rules of prosody. The folk-poets experimented with the doha which was used in other literary Indian traditions such as Braj and Rajasthani. Latif made a structural change in the doha in which the first and fourth, or the second and third hemistich, ended in rhyme:

*Laharunni lakha libaasa pani pasanu hekiro,
oonhe tahin ameeqa jee, vaare chaadi vimaasa,
Kaatee tikhee ee ma thie, maru muniyaaee hoi,
maana virmanni toi, mooni priyaan jaa hathiraa.*

*(Waves have many a vesture, but water is One.
In the deep sea, there is no duality.
Let the knife be sharp, let my beloved's hands
remain longer on my neck.)*

The wae form comes at the end of every sur as a finale. It begins with a thalh or refrain with the rhyme generally at the end. Usually there are five verses ending with the same rhyme, and after every verse, the refrain is repeated.

For example:

*mandhu peeande moon, saajanu sahee sunjaato,
mandhu peeande moon ...
pee piyaalo 'ishq jo, sabhukee samajhya-soon,
mandhu peeande moon ...*

*(Having tasted the wine, we recognized our beloved,
Having tasted the wine ...
We drank a goblet of love we understood everything,
Having tasted the wine ...)*

~

Shah Latif's poetry is metrical, but adapted to song. The sufi poets sang out their baits and sometimes a short vowel was lengthened or a long vowel shortened for rhythm. Latif's music drew upon the classical and the folk and includes songs, ballads and devotional verses.

Unlike in classical raags or melodies, the cadence of Shah Latif's surs are based on words and meanings of the baits and waees. They are basically musical renderings expressed through the rhythm and melody of words in contrast to classical music which is expressed by the rhythm and melody of sound.

During the days of Shah Latif, the tambura had four strings. He introduced one more string adjacent to the zuban or outer string, tuned as sa, shadaj, of the tar saptak, seven tones, in a conventional style. When the music begins, the melody of the new sur is spelled out at the very start, and thereafter when the vocal performance of the wae composition ascends, the rhythmic beats on the tambura with the right hand of the performer provide the necessary taal. Shah Latif's purpose was to simplify the complicated technique of the taal and therefore he devised

only two basic taals, which he called the dedhi (the 1.5 time) and the du-tali (the double time).

Shah Latif sang his baits in Sindhi in an age when Arabic was the language of the Quran, and Persian the court language.

~

To appreciate the technicalities and beauty of Latif's surs, one has to hear them in the original and there are many versions available of the same.

The German scholar, Dr Annemarie Schimmel, Pakistani poet Shaikh Ayaz and Prof Kalyan Advani worked extensively on Latif's poetry and sufism in their lifetimes. I am indebted to them for keeping alive the tradition of Shah Abdul Latif.

I am especially happy that Anju Makhija has joined hands with Sindhi poet, Hari Dilgir, to provide contemporary readers with a rendering in free verse that captures the very spirit and essence of Shah Latif's surs. It's a work of perseverance and embodies an Indianness not found in previous translations. That Shah Latif belongs to both India and Pakistan, Hindus and Muslims, is indisputable. In fact, he belongs to the whole world, to humanity itself.

TRANSLATORS' NOTES

Anju Makhija

The idea of translating *Shah Jo Risalo* first took root in my mind when I attended a literary conference in Adipur, Kutch. My interest was kindled when speaker after speaker touched upon the greatness of the sufi poet Shah Abdul Latif, addressing him as the “Shakespeare of Sindh” and as a link between Hindus and Muslims. I was told that the original *Risalo*, the compiled works of Latif, was in Adipur and a copy preserved in the Museum of London. I also learned that scholars like Dr Ernest Trumpp had done extensive work on the saint-poet, as had several Sindhi academics and writers. However, Latif’s work had been largely ignored by Indo-English scholars and a comprehensive translation had not been attempted in India. Many considered it an almost impossible task as his poetry was extremely lyrical and replete with alliterations and puns. He ingeniously combined strands of Islamic thought and Persian mystical poetry with Indian folk tales and songs.

The decision to translate Latif’s work was rather spontaneous. I felt that he was not only part of my Sindhi heritage but belonged to millions of others around the world who had chosen the path of sufism in this age of disharmony. When fundamentalism and other “isms” throttle, and human folly triumphs, the direct approach

of the sufis can point the right way there. However, that too has its hurdles, I was to learn. When the sufi poet, Mansur, stated, "I am God" emphasizing the oneness between God and man, he was stoned to death. To seek the divine without the support of established religion, was considered blasphemy.

~

I began my work by reading essays and books by Indian, Pakistani and foreign scholars. However, a simple statement, made by one of the delegates at the Adipur conference, provided me with the anchor I needed. The statement – "Latif is Love" was singularly simple, but it gave me the strength to undertake a seemingly daunting task. Of course, without the collaboration of Hari Dilgir, not a word could have been written. His knowledge of Latif's poetry, his mastery of the "old" Sindhi with its sprinkling of Arabic and Persian words, his poetic abilities and sense of discipline were astonishing.

When the Kutch earthquake took its toll, and part of Dilgir's house was destroyed, he moved to Ahmedabad but continued sending translations of Shah's work. I have no hesitation in saying that I have learnt as much about sufism by associating with Dilgir as I have from Latif's poetry. The process itself became a prayer. We communicated so frequently that the distance between

Mumbai and Kutch seemed to vanish. Looking back, it almost seemed like the spirit of Latif was with us. Working on this translation paved the way for my own spiritual search.

Latif's *Risalo* has often been described as one long "wail of separation." The lover, without his beloved, or the seeker without God, merely drifts through the ocean of life. Latif's work, although rich in similes and metaphors, allusions to Persian, Arabic, Indian and Islamic traditions, ultimately touches the core of one's being. The reader enters the realms of sufism not by abstract and ambiguous concepts but, more often than not, by concrete illustrations from popular folk tales which serve as spiritual allegories. Shah Latif chose the unassuming way of the fakir in both his life and poetic expressions.

~

We found that previous translations in English indulged in effusive language, perhaps in an attempt to "romanticize" his poetry. Some were even take-offs on the original, often elaborating on realms briefly mentioned in the *Risalo*. Having said this, as most translators know, the process itself can be tedious. Attempting to take someone else's voice, and filtering it through one's own, is not an easy task. Loyalty to the original is required as well as meaningful resonance in the target language. Dealing with ancient text

compounds the problem. The words must be “reborn” at a sub-conscious level, even as the logical process of structuring and editing continues.

A K Ramanujan’s translation from the Tamil to English in *Speaking of Shiva* helped us define both visual and structural parameters as did Dilip Chitre’s translation of Tukaram in *Says Tuka*. However, in the end, each translation stands on its own feet, defined by the work, and emerging from the style and content of the original.

Ramanujan has aptly pointed out:

“A translation has to be true to the translator no less than to the original. He cannot jump off his own shadow. Translation is choice, interpretation, assertion, of taste ...”

~

We have followed Kalyan Advani’s highly respected Sindhi version of the *Risalo* and provided page and verse numbers to facilitate easy reference. While most are as per the original, in some cases, the sequence has been changed to make the material more accessible to readers. Over the years, the original version of the *Risalo* itself has undergone change by those who compiled and translated Shah’s surs. In our research, we found that the process still continues. We hope our translation of Advani’s version will provide links for further translations.

Shah’s *Risalo* is divided into thirty surs or musical

compositions based largely on classical Indian raags. These are presented in two to four lines called baits, often followed by a longer poem called Wae, more popularly known as Kaafi in Sindh, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The Kaafi is usually sung with one singer reciting a verse with the second singer responding; back and forth it goes, rising to great emotional heights. The baits are performed in two ways i.e. in sanhoon or a thin, low voice and graham or a thick, high-pitched voice.

We have translated practically all the thirty surs of the *Risalo*. The verses were selected on the basis of literary value, thematic variation and those that accentuated Shah's beliefs. We stayed close to the language of the original and tried to wed the "old" Sindhi with the "newness" of modern English poetry. The line arrangements adhere to Latif's verse as far as possible. However, it was impossible to keep to meter and rhyme pattern and we chose to do a rendering in free verse. Some lines, which may be termed as cliches today, are found in Latif's verse. We decided to leave them for when they were written in the original, hundreds of years ago, they were certainly not fatigued phrases. We have tried to include the favourites, so to speak, which are quoted in everyday conversations and sung by disciples with the same frenzy as one would attempt a pop song, with dance and music all through the night.

As many of Latif's surs are allegories, based on folk stories, these have been provided. The readers will find it useful to familiarize themselves with the stories before reading the verse. Shah occasionally tends to get weighed down under a particular idea, and the reader, who finds this repetition jarring is reminded that, as with a scene shot from different angles, Latif tries to make us see the same subject from various viewpoints, in order to arrive at a point of truth. In readings and at musical gatherings, the rhythmic repetition is particularly enjoyable.

Today, sufi music has the world clapping to its beat. Shah Latif's voice, powerful yet subtle, has for centuries reflected the ancient wisdom of the Indus Valley civilization and the way of life of the common folk. Now, centuries later, I am grateful to be a part of it all.

Hari Dilgir

I have always thought the art of translation more difficult than creating a piece of writing. In the latter, the author can give expression to feelings, thoughts, inspirations and aspirations. The author is at liberty to present the same in a language and style of her/his own. The translator, on the other hand loses out on this freedom having to stick to the framework of the original. Consequently, the translator has to fit into an alien environment.

Translating poetry is an even more difficult task. The greater the poet, the more difficult the translator's job. For such a poet identifies not merely with her/his people and immediate surroundings, but also with the ethics and ethos of her/his times. Shah Abdul Latif was not only the greatest poet of Sindh, but its very soul.

Words are more than mere expressions of the writer's thought process. They represent the culture, philosophy, moral values, opinions and ideals of the ethnic community to which the poet belongs. It's practically impossible to present the colloquialism of one language into another. A translator is bound to make some changes and colour the original with variations of the new language. Alterations in syntax, omissions and additions become unavoidable.

Shah's poetry has been described as narrative, dramatic and lyrical. At times, it's also moralistic and didactic in tone. But it is in the lyricism that he excels.

Music flows from his words and his poems abound in meaningful alliteration.

Dr H T Sorely in his book *Musa Pervagans* has rightly said that Shah is the greatest musical maestro of the world. He even goes to the extent of stating that Pakistan committed a blunder by declaring Mohamed Iqbal as the national poet of Pakistan. This honour should have gone to Shah Abdul Latif. Some scholars have made attempts at translating a few poems of Shah into English, Urdu, and Hindi, but these ventures have not been completely satisfactory, often due to the self-conscious use of rhymes in an attempt to match the lyrical quality of the original. Keeping this in mind, we have carefully selected only those poems which afforded effective translations in free verse. Latif's poetry is a garden of roses and we have tried to sift out the nectar

Ours is a humble effort to bring to the readers the inimitable poetry of Shah Abdul Latif of Bhitai.

Seeking the Beloved

All line and verse numbers in this translation refer to Kalyan Advani's, *Shah Jo Risalo*. Bombay: Hindustan Kitab Ghar, 1958.

Sur Kalyan



without beginning
without end
all knowing monarch
of the universe
omnipotent and benevolent
the one and only
lord

utter his name
sing his praises
the ever compassionate
creator of the cosmos

(1/1)

he is the one
the only one
cause of all causes
if you accept this
why pay obeisance to others?

(1/2)

the wise
abide by the right
never taking
the wrong path

they alone
unite with the lord
(1/5)

if you remember to repeat
he is the one
beyond comparison
you'll hear a voice whisper
drink
the sweet ambrosia
(2/11)

head
no torso
torso
no head
wrists
hands cut
those who seek him
are slaughtered
(2/13)

listen
ignorant one
neither lover
nor beloved
neither creator
nor creation
is he
this secret disclosed
to seekers of perfection
(3/14)

the lord
reflects his own image
becomes his own beloved
embraces his own creation
(3/17)

he is
that
this

life
death

friend
enemy

breath of breath
is he
(3/18)

one palace
numerous doors
as many windows
i see
you
everywhere
in many ways

how should i describe
your countless manifestations
my lord?
(3/20&21)

all adore the lord
eyes drink his nectar

he understands our minds
eyes drink his nectar

latif's music pulsates with love
eyes drink his nectar
(3/Waee)

ill health
crucifying pain
both sacred to me

my beloved
worries
about my well-being
(4/1)

will you
follow me to the gallows
my friend?

the gallows await those
who seek the beloved
(4/3)

if your love
is true
first cut off
your head
lover
do not return
till you are beheaded
(4/4)

see them
celebrate at the gallows
an inspiring sight
why hesitate?
why break your
age-old vows with love?

come
be butchered
(4/5)

up on the scaffold
lovers do not quiver
behold
eyes meet
gallows turn into garlands
(4/6)

why blame the dagger
when
the butcher holds the handle?

the beloved's behavior
causes even steel to quiver
lovers are transformed
(5/11)

i pray
for the dagger
to be blunt

let it linger
a little bit longer
in the beloved's hand
(5/12)

butcher
possessor of daggers
i hunt you out
in love's slaughter-house
i place my head on the block
chop me to pieces
my lord
(5/16)

if you want love
go to the tavern
cut the head
place it in the barrel
drink brave one
drown in the draught
this lethal drink is cheap
in exchange for the head
(6/18))

just
one sip
of that priceless wine

for
just one sip
they sacrifice life
(6/22)

intoxicated
lovers revel
in the poisonous drink
drowning in the deadly venom

pained by separation
they hide bleeding wounds
says latif
(6/23)

skull
torso
flesh
all on fire
all torn apart
only those need speak of love
who carry heads
in their hands
(7/26)

drinking wine
we behold sajan
sipping from the goblet
realization dawns

drinking wine
we behold sajan
our worldly life
is but a passing storm

drinking wine
we behold sajan
you alone exist
says latif
(7/Waee)

first
he awakens me
then
forsakes me
i am
stabbed
wounded

how i hate the treatment
of those physicians
(8/1)

no doctor can cure me
my mentor has the remedy
he alone knows the treatment
to relieve me of this malady
(8/4)

rabab-like
my veins throb
but
he remains silent
my beloved butcher
soothe me
only you
can pacify my soul
(8/6)

why yearn for grace?
why not pay respect?

his place
once visited
other destinations
are a waste
(8/9)

accept
his offerings
sometimes
they may taste bitter
try again
they will be palatable
(9/2)

you long for him
he longs for you

to remember
and be remembered
is the secret

with honeyed words
dagger in hand
he comes to you
(9/13)

i
heard the call
just once
his voice echoes
throughout my life
(9/14)

he asked
with a smile
am i not your lord?
since that day
pain crushes me
(9/15)

he calls
then kills
his killing
is the calling
why fear the spear of love?
in ecstasy forgo all
embrace death
(9/17)

he calls
then rejects
his rejection
is the calling

if separation is the opposite
of union
why lose hope?
(10/18)

he is my physician and medicine
he will come to dispense compassion

he is my physician and medicine
he will enquire about my case

he is my physician and medicine
he will cure me of my ailments

sisters
none equals him
says latif
(10/Waee)

Sur Yaman Kalyan



you are my friend
my physician

you bestow maladies
and remedies

you alone can provide
the medicine

(11/4)

the physician proposes
beloved disposes

he stabs me
with his knife

(11/5)

this wound
i suffer silently

if i shout
the world will hear

how can i tell them
my friend has stabbed me?
(12/7)

your arrows
laden with love
render cures worthless
physicians helpless

bodies ache
bleed
(12/9)

silently
dressing their wounds
let us spend a night
with these souls
my friend
(12/13)

how can the healthy know
the torment of the wounded?

unrelenting bodies
lament night after night
(12/18)

to impress the world
some shed tears

mother
true lovers
neither weep
nor speak
a single word
(13/20)

if you want to meet the loved one
take a lesson from thieves

alert through the night
stealthily they move
neither uttering a sound
nor fearing death

(14/8)

see
those moths
lovers of light
annihilate themselves

if you want
to be like a moth
come
burn the fire itself

the fire
that devours many
(17/9&10)

moth-like
you perish in the flame
yet remain ignorant
you cannot endure the blaze
my friend
(17/12)

his
deadly
eyes
seek
heads

for a mere sip
of wine
(20/5)

sit
with the assassin
watch
him convert venom into nectar
drink
a few cups with him
(20/6)

winter beckons
cup bearers
offer a spread
others come
to offer their heads
(20/10)

mokhi

jugs

bottles

goblets

fill your distillery

despair not

seekers are on their way

(21/17)

connoisseurs enjoy

varied wines

willingly they offer their heads

for a taste of the divine

says sayyad

(22/21)

the beloved has graced my abode
a wonderful union it is
after many days i have been favoured

the beloved has graced my abode
a wonderful union it is
i thought him far but he is near

the beloved has graced my abode
a wonderful union it is
god has been charitable

says latif

(22/Waee)

unhappy
is a sufi
when he gets something

happy
is a sufi
with nothing

creedless
is a sufi
struggling with the self

casteless
is a sufi
befriending all
(23/3&4)

if you still possess
desires
how can you call
yourself a sufi?

no
this is not the way
chop off the head
throw it in the fire
(23/6)

this
world
overflows
with
egos
oblivious
of the
magician's
sorcery
(23/9)

the beloved
a sea of splendour
the world
a gathering of solicitors
says rumi
this secret
once known
seals the lips
forever
(24/10)

the afflicted ones
repeat sermons of suffering
commune with the beloved
day after day
(24/17)

alif
is the beginning
alif
is the end

why recite anything else?

i cannot proceed
beyond the first line
even this lesson
not yet mastered

you alone are everything
nothing else matters
(24/18&19)

azazeel is the true lover
all others are immature

with profound love
even the cursed
felt blessed

(25/24)

more
they read
less
they know

more
pages turned
more
sins committed

(25/27)

a glimpse of the beloved
far better than fasts and prayers

kaatib
why write so many pages?
the source
of all knowledge is just
one letter
(26/33)

why these places of worship
why this constant fasting?
know the alakh within
he is everywhere
(26/34)

your eyes
shoot sharp arrows
why this aggression
this tyranny
qabil
(27/3)

if he showers arrows
bare your breast
stand erect before the gallows
(28/8)

with arrows in your bow
shoot me
but beware
my friend
you are
within me

you may strike yourself
(28/10)

beloved
i stand where i was
struck before
favour me
strike me once more
(28/12)

lover
be a target
in the battlefield of love
utter not a word
says sayyad
let the arrow
strike the heart
(28/13)

with your blood boiling
do not boast of love
with a face pale
pining heart
barter your head
(30/4)

frequent visits
add to vanity
incessant talk
leads to ignorance
learn to love him
patiently
your pain
will turn to ecstasy
(30/5)

when he invites you
for a drink
gulp like a camel
none can enter
uninvited
(32/1)

a story
untold
no one knows

a story
told
may be misunderstood

this deep mystery
unfolds for the fortunate
the destined ones

(33/6&7)

accept fate at any cost
never say he has forgotten me

if the connection breaks
bridge it
if your fate turns vile
rejoice in it

cherish this friendship
with humility

(33/9&10)

if the company is agonizing
give it up
even if immense wealth
is at stake

if the company is constructive
build a home there
my friend
(35/23&24)

Sur Sorath



Sur Sorath is based on the following folk tale:

Rai Diach, King of Jhunagadh, was a great connoisseur of music and a philanthropist. He lived in a palace with his queen Sorath, daughter of King Anirai. Following a dispute, the latter attacked Rai Diach, but could not lay siege. So he announced that anyone who could bring Diach's head would be awarded a casket of gold, precious pearls and diamonds.

Beejal, a wandering minstrel knew of Rai Diach's love for music. He accepted King Anirai's offer and with his musical instruments – the chang and the surando – he reached Rai Diach's palace.

Beejal's music was truly melodious. The strings of his instruments were made from the dried intestines of a deer he had chanced upon in the forest.

Rai Diach was so enthralled that he called Beejal up to his palace and promised to give him whatever he desired. When Beejal demanded his head, the king was shocked and pleaded that he ask for something else. Beejal did not relent and the king, keeping his word, cut off his own head.

With the head, Beejal went to King Anirai, who regretting his decision, condemned the inhuman act. Beejal returned to Girnar where a pyre for Rai Diach was ready. Queen Sorath was about to jump into the fire. Beejal too, in violent fit of remorse, threw himself into the blaze.

In this story, Beejal is the mentor. Rai Diach, the disciple, gladly surrenders his head, symbolic of the ego.

adorning his chang
uttering the lord's name
he set forth

seeing the palanquin
he prayed: merciful god
may my music please the monarch
(315/1)

sorath's groom
monarch of great name and fame
honour this simpleton
who knows not how to beg

charitable one
why wait till dawn?
fulfil my desire here and now
(315/5&6)

monarch
i can tolerate
neither heat nor cold
but for you
i'll play this lyre

listen
this bard will be honoured
with a mere spray of your saliva
(316/7&8)

with humility beejal played
the music filled the palace

at the right moment
the king shared his secret

none could understand
how two became one
(317/4)

not many could understand
but at last a few unravelled
the enigma

“i am man’s secret
he is mine”

the king and the minstrel were united
(318/5)

i come with a begging bowl
though i have never begged
i have many horses in my stable
i cannot sing for a pittance
i do not care for a few elephants
i have come for your precious head
(318/9)

day and night he demands heads
sparing neither royalty nor pauper
they bow
he exterminates
it pleases him immensely
(319/14)

beggar
collector of heads
may you never return
enough crowns
have crumbled in the dust
(319/15)

early morning beeja! played
the king rejoiced hearing him

come up minstrel
i'll throw treasures at your feet
my head is but a guest
in your hands
let it rest

(320/1)

the bard entered the palace
ready to take the head
junagadh would soon be in jeopardy
all would mourn

(320/3)

jaajik
i pledge obeisance ten times
what you demand has little value
if you want i'll cut it twenty times
said diach
(320/6)

bard
you have asked for nothing
had you desired what i could not give
it would have been a great insult
for a philanthropist like me
(321/8)

for you
i'll sacrifice my bones
my body
and even more

bard
leave quickly before you break
your promise to anirai
(321/9&10)

if i had a hundred heads
i would cut one for each string
if my head was put in the scale
a single string would weigh less

bard
this head does not befit you
(321/12&13)

the bard's desire
pleased the yadav king
minstrel here is the head
existence is in non-existence
(321/18)

chaaran
your chang and your music
butchered me last night
how do you play such melodious notes
and still manage to stay alive?
(323/3)

chaaran
your wish is my demand
your strings more precious
than my wife sorath
jaajik
come near tell me quickly
shall I cut it off my shoulders
or surrender it with the torso?
(323/6)

string
dagger
head
all became one
(324/10)

bard
none like you has come before
thank you for your request
the maestro played his lyre
the music reached a crescendo
out came the dagger
off went the head
(324/11)

girnar's flower plucked
hundreds wept with sorath
offering their heads they cried
the king passed away last night
(324/12)

the city fell silent
music faded
sorath passed away
the bard whispered the word
the head lay content
(325/15&16)

Sur Prabhati



your stringed instrument
hangs on the wall
still you fail to greet
the golden dawn
who can call you a minstrel?
(449/1)

how can you sleep unfettered?
weep
in the early hours
weep
tomorrow
your instrument will lie
abandoned on the ground
(499/2)

dejected drummer
what did you do yesterday?
shameless fellow
shun idleness
beg the king for your reward
(499/5)

the journey is long
and the minstrel's song falters

king
i plead for your blessings
here and now

(449/6)

he secretly favours
simple souls
if those experts come to know
they'll destroy their instruments
instantly

(449/7)

experts are in abundance
but what use is expertise?
tainted are all human deeds

you are paras
i a piece of iron
a mere touch i turn into gold
(450/8)

babbling
he fell on the floor
the king carried him in the chariot
honoured the innocent one
(450/12)

singing songs
minstrels were at peace
they knew not how and when
the king would be pleased
(450/16)

at midnight
why did you not communicate with
the lord?

when he gave out treasures
other minstrels filled their bowls
to the brim
(451/17)

the king reproached the beggar
why did you move away from my door?

why did you approach others
no wonder hard days have befallen

(451/18)

seeing the minstrel
in tattered clothes
the king summoned him

the wise realized
he favours the downtrodden

(451/22)

you are the king
i am a beggar
you are the giver
i am a receiver

hearing your call
i pick up my instrument
ready to sing
(451/24)

you are the giver
your bounty has no seasons
a visit to my hamlet
would be a great honour
for an unkempt beggar like me
(452/26)

revere the morning star
sing for the lord
resentful is the king
when your mind
drifts away from him
(452/27)

Leela Chanesar



King Chanesar Dasra, ruler of the Soomre dynasty, lived in the south of Sindh. He was extremely handsome and many women were attracted to him though he had a beautiful wife Leela.

Kaunroon, daughter of Rana Khangar, the ruler of Lakhsat, fell in love with King Chanesar, and vowed to win him over or commit suicide. After much planning, she decided to enter his palace as a maid.

One day, when Kaunroon was in the royal bedroom, she revealed her identity to Leela showing her the priceless necklace as a proof. Leela, who loved jewellery, desired it at any cost. Kaunroon promised to give it to her on a condition that she be allowed to sleep with the king for one night. Leela agreed reluctantly. One evening, when Chanesar was drunk, she asked Kaunroon to go to her spouse.

Early morning when the king woke up, he was shocked to see Kaunroon and even more shocked with her story. Offended at the shameless behaviour of his queen, he decided to abandon her and in revenge marry Kaunroon. Leela apologized and fell at his feet, but he did not relent.

Leela left the palace and went to stay with her parents. Her days were spent in solitude and repentance. Sometime later, King Chanesar was invited to attend a wedding of one of his ministers. It was at the same village where Leela's parents lived. Leela was among the dancers at the celebrations and, not realizing this, something prompted Chanesar to request her to remove the veil. The unexpected sight of his former wife, whom he still loved,

caused him to collapse. Seeing him, Leela too fell on the floor and died. The two souls were thus united forever in death.

This allegory highlights man's fall when he shifts his loyalty from the supreme to worldly possessions.

separation stings
for god's sake
my beloved
forsake not this helpless being

in your royal presence
i'll burn
this strand of strings

i'll burn
this strand of strings
will it to hell

reunion alone
can redeem this tainted soul
(122/2)

chanesar jaam
honoured king
feared across the land
the cynosure of all eyes
sincere in a world
of hypocrisy and deceit

you bartered him
for a petty necklace?
(235/3&4)

dazzled by the jewel
your action led to the rift

foolish one
the page has turned
dohag you must face
like crores of deluded souls
seduced by a mere trinket

defeated one
you lost favour
dohag you must face
(235/5&6)

i curse myself
carried away
by the glitter and the glitz
i lost out
kaunroon outwitted me
(236/7)

that necklace had no pearls
you were deceived
the trick
caused the separation
says latif
you choked on that string of sorrow
a maid emerged victorious
the beloved
otherwise never shows animosity
(236/869)

bare arms
neck
hair plainly tied
no surma or singhar
even then
chanesar was pleased
gold bangles and red necklace
hair perfumed with oils
yet
he abandons me
(236/10&11)

note of discord struck
the jewel becomes an excuse
friend
none can subdue a husband
he overrules all reasoning
(237/14)

she now sleeps in our bed
under the same quilt
lord chanesar
i never expected this
of you
(237/16)

enter my abode mian chanesar
i have flung the necklace far away
my beloved i was misled
i have flung the necklace far away
at your door i dare not flirt
i have flung the necklace far away
(238/Waee)

lured by riches
in the hell of vanity
she scorched

labelled a fool
ridiculed by all
her child-like innocence
forever lost
(238/1)

how could you deceive a lord
who knows your deepest cravings?

leela
despite your ingenuity
did you really believe
a necklace
would do the trick?
(238/3)

i wanted to please him
to share his bed
but
god willed something else
those tricksters
have been elevated
once known to be perceptive
i am now unable to raise my head
(238/4&5)

god
do not make me cunning
they sometimes
encounter dilemmas

when i was not so
my beloved accepted me
(238/6)

why are married women
abandoned by their husbands?

perhaps it angers the spouse
when women please themselves?
(238/11)

leela why show off?
why argue with chanesar
as if he were your own?

he is quite elusive
now kaunroon has won him over
(239/14)

leela wrap a piece of cloth
around your neck
do away with pretence
he will not refuse
when approached with remorse
(240/20)

if he does not respond
weep or beg
please him somehow
implore him yet again
the master is merciful
(240/21&22)

let none try to deceive chanesar
or take him for granted
there is no room for mistake
the slightest error leads to punishment
i realize that now
(241/1&2)

the suhaginis deck themselves
with necklaces and gems
you prefer the humble
my lord
i realize that now
(241/3)

after endless mistakes
i stand at your door
if you get offended
where can i go?
my protector
i beg
forgiveness for
my follies
(241/6)

i am foolish
you're full of grace
you always pardon
this sinful face
lord
it's in your nature to clothe
the naked
(241/7)

my lord
why act as if you never belonged to me?
please do not scrutinize
come nearer and honour me
please do not stay away
(241/8)

my detestable ways
have dragged me to the ground
i realize that now

lord
do not give up on me
you have many consorts
I have only you
(242/10&11)

leela
contain your sorrow
forget the past
pick up a broom
sweep the courtyard
the lord is about to enter
your humble hut
(242/14&15)

leela
you cannot argue with the lord
you cannot understand him
even if you feel
he is your own
kaunroon has won over the king
(239/14)

Sri Raag



worthless are my earrings

i trade in trash

not pearls

i am a nobody

a mere sinner

you are the knower

lord

you sustain this miserable being

(50/7)

give me what you like

in these tumultuous waters

i am helpless

accept my request

lord

steer my boat

away

from these strong currents

(50/10)

superior sails
new riggings
oars of ivory

lord
protect these brave sailors
with their loaded ships
may their mission be fulfilled
(50/12&13)

merciful sustainer
of the world
i cannot endure a fair trial
only you can shield me
(52/1)

in the deep ocean
jewels are in abundance
says latif

divers bring up priceless piles
even a small fraction
will fill your coffers
(52/3&4)

standing
on the banks of the ocean
why be indolent?

see them sail
your turn could be next
(54/13)

the ways of god and men
differ

men enter whirlpools
god salvages boats
steering them away
from the deep
praise to the lord

the boat is old and leaking
do not overload it
seeker
(54/15&16)

boatman
how can you have the best
of both worlds?
drowsy all night
near the rudder
you want to sail away
the next morning?
(58/16)

how can you sleep
boatman?

like curds churning
the water swirls
the port is perilous
(58/20)

your companions load the boats
alas for your sleepy eyes

your neighbours tighten the ropes
alas for your sleepy eyes

the boat sets sail your turn has come
alas for your sleepy eyes

dreaming you slept the night away
alas for your sleepy eyes

did you not hear the roar of the waves?
alas for your sleepy eyes

do not forget the wrath of watery graves
alas for your sleepy eyes
(58/Waee)

lord
everyone confers goodness on the virtuous
lord
you confer goodness even on the evil ones
i entrust all to you
(60/3)

where precious pearls are hoarded
hoards of thieves are seen
consider it your fortune
if jewels are not stolen
(62/18)

get up and pray for mercy
the tide will torment you
otherwise
for unknown reasons
the ocean did not claim you
yesterday
(63/3)

yesterday
huge vessels capsized

today
your small boat is in
the eye of the storm
(63/4)

mariner
steer your boat clear
even seasoned seamen fear
to cross the ocean
with expert guidance
(63/7)

fasten your raft
in shallow waters

friend
none will tow it
in the deep
(65/1)

waters rise and ebb
celestial bodies never rest
you take everything easy
in sleep and sloth
life passes by
(65/8)

difficult is the path to the supreme
even those who appear to know
are sometimes bewildered
with love in your heart
swim against the current
(65/9)

Sur Aasaa



vigilant
i search for a mentor
combing infinity
limitless is he
endlessly i yearn
he evades me
(355/1)

with
the burden
of ego
none can cross the ocean
he is one
discard duality
(355/2)

save me
from duality

i'll merge
when
i becomes you
(355/3)

that
cannot exist without
this
god's secrets lurk in his creation
say the seers
(355/7)

if your self
you still see
what use are prayers?

if your self
you can forget
then go proclaim
god is great
(356/11)

if with the sun's first rays
the eyes do not see the beloved

pull them out
feed them to the crows
(357/11)

somewhere something
these eyes have seen
exhilarated by love
these eyes cannot sleep
(358/9)

how they weep
more they see
the more they want

how they pine
for a glimpse of the divine
(358/13)

these eyes
crisscross paths
ever since they fell in love

now quarrelling
now making up
(358/15)

these eyes
brimming with tears
clashing like monsoon clouds

such a heavy downpour
(358/17)

what to do with these eyes?
they do not heed my advice
even in sleep i pay the price
wandering to hazardous locales
they endanger my life
(359/19)

what to do with these eyes?
falling in love
without asking me?
i am trapped
no retreat for me
(359/20)

hold a steady inward gaze
swim contrary to the world's ways

choose to go upstream
while others float downstream

(359/21)

eyes
jealous is the beloved
when your gaze wanders

save yourself for him
alone

(359/23)

if your body
is not finer
than a needle
how will you find a place
in the beloved's eyes?

(361/13)

my beloved
when you praise me
others envy

let's not waste
this precious night
in accusations

(361/16)

love is demanding
never easy to preserve
guard it from gossipers
mischief-mongers

(361/17)

those rogues should not hound me
is it a crime to seek the beloved?

love's arrow has struck
i bleed
(362/18)

he strikes
but he is not cruel
he strikes
for he is benevolent
we fail to understand
his paradoxical ways
(362/24)

renounce
display of renunciation
let go
without going anywhere
heed this
let others heed it
move
towards the void
(364/405)

skepticism
please go
we are those
for whom we pine
we have seen
our beloved
(365/8)

reciting the kalma
bears no mark of real faith
where deceit and ego lurk
outwardly a muslim
inwardly a fake
(365/14)

you cease to be a true kafir
refrain from calling yourself one
unfit for janio and tilak
you are not even a true hindu
(365/15)

a face like mores
in truth a devil
wretched one
why not drop the mask?
(365/16)

most avoid vices
the beloved shuns virtues
cast them away
virtues listed
lose their value
approach him
head down
he will come to you
(366/24)

hidden from me
are the innermost secrets
of the world
countless oceans boil within
i burn
smokeless i burn
(367/30)

my beloved bound me first
then threw me into deep waters
standing on the bank
he said
do not wet your garments
(367/38)

how can one standing
in deep waters
escape from being wet?
holy one
teach me this secret
(368/39)

those who make their
body a rosary
mind a bead
heart a musical instrument
hear songs of love
god is one
god is infinite
even in sleep they remain awake
(368/47)

Sur Kamode



This Sur is based on the following folk tale of Noori-Jam.

Jam Tamachi was a ruler of Sindh. In his kingdom was a beautiful lake, Keenjhar, where many dark-skinned fisherfolks had settled. Among them lived Noori, who despite her background, had unmatched grace. Once, while boating, the king saw her and was so impressed that he made her his queen.

One day, the king asked all his queens to present themselves before him. The most admired one would be rewarded with a ride in the royal coach. All the queens adored themselves in glittering jewellery. But Noori, a personification of humility, stood in a simple dress with a lotus in her hand which she presented to the king.

Touched by her simplicity, she was selected for the royal ride and declared his chief queen.



i am a smelly gunderi
you are a man of royalty
i am a fisherwoman full of flaws
you are powerful and scholarly
with your pomp and palaces
will you favour me?

king
please do not
turn me away
(305/1to5)

you are an emperor
who honoured us
poor
we were ostracized by all
dirty
we quivered in our skins
you made us
your kith and kin
(306/8to10)

noori
you are no longer a fisherwoman
you need not cut the smelly fish

let other queens
embellish themselves

you
a fresh lotus
outclassed them
won the coveted ride
in the royal carriage
(307/17to19)

neither her face
nor her mannerisms
revealed her occupation

she became
queen of queens

the king
tied the beedo on her wrist
(307/23)

in keenjhar
none equalled her beauty
all fisher folk exempted
from taxes and tariffs

the king fans her
with peacock feathers
(307/24)

my royal husband
apple of my eye
you have elevated me
may you live long

over the water
under flowering trees
lotus on either bank
boat swaying
in the northern breeze

in the cradle of the lake
i am with the king
satiated
fulfilled
(603/1to5)

Sur Ramkali



fire
in their souls
a burning desire
these yogis belong to another world
i cannot live without them
(395/2)

the lahutes departed
leaving behind
echoes of their songs
i search everywhere
i cannot live without them
(395/3&4)

divine music resonates
my head throbs
i die a thousand deaths

i search everywhere
i cannot live without them
(395/5)

do not forget the vairagis
even for a moment

follow their footprints
their paths
to eternity

i cannot live without them
(395/6)

no deliberation
or discord
just
haunting music

an awareness
of the here and now

i cannot live without them
(395/6)

their music
steers me
up the stream
of divine secrets

i cannot live without them
(396/11&12)

such mysteries
seductive are their singees

i am wounded
shattered

i cannot live without them
(396/14&15)

from hinglaj
the naked ones go to naani
via dwarka
to pay homage to shiva
ali guides them
i cannot live without them
(398/31)

to their mystical music
pulsating rhythm
the world turns a deaf ear
i cannot live without them
(399/40)

forsaking the parts
they merge with the whole
their only abode
being the land of the homeless
(399/41)

absorbed in alakh
afflicted with bleeding wounds
restless for the lord
they wander day and night
let us go and visit them
(403/1&2)

reject the norm
wear the garb of nothingness
if you shame the attire
the attire will be ashamed of you
he alone is a saami
who surrenders
(403/4&5)

leaving attachments behind

ascetics pierce their ears

lighting a campfire

earth becomes their throne

abandoning everything

towards hinglaj they proceed

they accept nothing

let us go and visit them

(404/8to10)

neither vice nor virtue
caste nor creed
absence of greed
the fire of separation simmers
tears of blood flow
they long to meet the lord
(404/13)

they will return says my heart
these aadasis will overlook my shortcomings
i will lay my hair on their path
my sorrows will flee when they accept me
they will take me wherever they go
they will return says my heart
(405/Waee)

if a yogi you want to be
stay away from the worldly
learn from those
who know everything
yet pretend to know nothing

befriend the blessed
who are never reborn
(406/1&2)

if a yogi you want to be
serve the servant
respect your guru
rid the self of desire

with the sword of endurance
proceed towards hinglaj
(406/3&4)

if a yogi you want to be
silence your mind
accept your fate
with a burning flame within
beads in hand
obey the great master
(406/6)

if a yogi you want to be
drink the cup of nothingness
become
that
nothingness
(406/7)

seeker
ordinary ears
do not decipher whispers

replace these
donkey's ears
sell them off

tune into the inner ear
(408/23)

do not be forgetful converse with allah
the path of love is laden with misery
even enlightened souls have gone weeping
those sleeping did not receive blessings

do not be forgetful converse with allah
at midnight he will come to you
(408/Waee)

with your face turned
in the right direction
the whole world is a mosque
great heights the yogis reach
higher than knowledge itself
tell me in which direction
should i bow my head
he is everywhere
(410/5)

the fire of love burns within
outside layers of ash settle
severe suffering
intense happiness
profound awareness
in the cave of silence
all is renounced
heaven and hell they shun
believers and non-believers
are treated alike
(411/12)

wandering
they did not find the lord
sitting still
they found him

no need to visit
kabul and kashmir

on the path of truth
they found him within
(411/16)

they accept raging winds
none protects them
but allah

surrounded by harshness
in the lap of nothingness
they live like contended kings
(412/20&21)

ram-ram
echoing in their souls
cups of silence they drink
like nomads
ever on the move
i miss them this morning
(413/2&3)

with passing years
dirt piles
ego fades
hair turns grey
liberated
they meet their master
(414/6)

my eyes led me astray
whom should i blame?

medicines failed me
doctors deserted me

a blissful memory remains
love refuses to wane

my eyes led me astray
whom should i blame?

latif craves today
for their exhilarating presence
(414/Waee)

they sleep
when others are awake
they move
when others are asleep

when allah resides
in the entire universe
where should i direct
these feet?
(416/6&7)

resting during the day
alert at midnight
never revealing their identity
the aadesis bathe in dust

hunger
their food
silence
their speech
(416/8)

throw away the langoti
tighten your belt
embrace nakedness

seeker
join these yogis
(417/14)

hearing the call
before the birth of islam
they severed all ties
became one with gorakhnath
(417/15)

lord
bring back the ascetics
like husks of grain
i'll shed my anxiety
when they visit my place
i'll spread the good news
(417/17)

do not desire
reverence or service
let go of desire itself
lips sealed
move towards purab
(418/22)

bidding goodbye the yogis left yesterday
prepared to face the heat and cold
they warmed their hands i shed tears
my heart broke like a piece of sandalwood
bidding goodbye the yogis left yesterday
prepared to face heat and cold
(418/Waee)

here for just one night
visit them many times a day
pour out your feelings
serve them well
gratify your being
for soon they'll depart

once in hinglaj
you'll meet them if luck favours
(419/1&2)

ashes
dry straws
a void
remains
they breathed life
into the conches
into me

as they leave
i weep
i weep
(420/8 to 11)

a mind troubled
was appeased
an eye blinded
opened
a garden blossomed
in the desert
(420/14to16)

yogis are many but I love these vairagis
smeared in dust they eat little
never saving a grain in their begging bowls
seated on the wayside i look for them
remembering the sanyasis tears well up
mother they were so very kind to me
they radiated brightness
yogis are many but i love these vairagis
says latif
(421/Waee)

unlike others these aadesis
feast on thirst and hunger

roza they choose
over festivities of id

(422/10)

yesterday
buried in memory
today
the day of departure

tomorrow
all will die
today
you must die
seeker
(423/12)

do not search without a lamp
it is futile
countless have been blinded
in this darkness
what you consider a lamp
is really the brilliant sun
converting the dark night
into a blazing day
(423/22&23)

silken robes covering
shabby rags inside
they become servants
of an ass

shabby rags covering
silken robes inside
they become servants
of the lord
(426/42&43)

seeker
seeing the many shades of flowers
do not get distracted

recognize
the one
the only one
(426/45)

what did they see
what terrified them?
the yogis could not stay
something compelled them to leave
(427/52)

no
sky
earth
sun
moon
light
darkness

only
the lord
(427/55)

i bow to the yogis
salute their search and determination
night and day they pervade my very being
at midnight i request allah
merciful god make me worthy of them
i bow to the yogis
salute their search and determination

(42/Waee)

Umar Marui



The story is based on the following folk tale:

Marui was the daughter of a farmer who lived in Maleer in the Thar desert. She was engaged to Khetsen, a man from her own community.

Phoga, a farm helper, also wanted to marry Marui but was refused by her father. The disappointed lover took revenge by instigating King Umar Soomro to kidnap Marui. Phoga spoke so highly of her that the King was tempted to make her his own wife. The two of them reached Maleer in disguise and managed to kidnap her near the village well and took her to Umarkote.

King Umar tempted her with luxuries but Marui rejected everything. She threatened to commit suicide if the King even touched her. She yearned for her village folk. Umar, frustrated at not being able to win her, thought that perhaps imposing hardships would help and kept her captive in a fort.

Pining for her people, Marui was on the verge of death. She requested Umar to send her corpse to Maleer and also assure her people that she had died a chaste woman. This touched Umar's heart. Respecting her loyalty and upright character, he arranged for her return.

Much to her dismay, Marui found that her people would not accept her. They asked her to prove her chastity by holding a hot iron bar. When Umar, who had made her his sister, heard about this, he was enraged and brought his army into the village. But

Marui urged him not to intervene and went through the ordeal. She was eventually accepted by her people.

Marui's love for Maleer, her native village, is a symbol of patriotism. As a spiritual allegory, Marui symbolizes the human soul pining for its original spiritual abode.

when i heard the words
am i not your lord?
my soul replied
yes you are

since then the vows
to my kinsfolk were made
(269/1)

from the first day of creation
i was bound to my maroos
soomra
do not chain me
such shackles are of no avail
(269/2&3)

before
sound
matter
adam
creation

i belonged to my beloved
how can i ever forget that?
(269/566)

this is the prison of my fate

i am a captive

this is a trap of destiny

i am caged

king

release me

return me to my village

(270/8)

camel men

bring their messages

i belong to my maroos

even if they ostracize me

ink in hand i try to write

my tears wet the pen

(271/4)

umar
everywhere in the vast thar
i see thatched huts of maroos
permit me to graze the cattle
leave with the loi's honour intact
(272/7)

village girls dress in loi
prefering coarse wool
to silken robes

king
do not force me to give up
my ancestral attire

ashamed
i'll burn in fire
(273/1)

how can love
be exchanged for gold
or huts for palaces?
that would be total misbehaviour
(274/11)

how can the disgraced wear white
or sleep under quilts?
how can the humiliated be remembered
or respected by anyone?

king
let me remain thirsty
i shun your sherbet
(274/12&13)

umar
the desert is their abode
golana and gugur trees their canopy
creepers their companions
my fortunate friends
delight in nature
(274/15)

if i die here
longing for my land
deliver my corpse to pawahars
those age-old creepers will preserve it

having died
i shall be resurrected
if my body reaches my soil
(282/14)

that is my desert my land
no taxes and few restrictions

there
walk my people
with their typical gait
baskets on head
water trickling
feet dusty
sweat dripping
placing flowers in the mangers
they celebrate mother earth's bounty
(285/7&8)

in my mind's eye
i see the winding trunks
of sodotti trees
how i wish to walk in the jungle
picking berries
my fiancé by my side
(285/9)

with a fine needle
my spirit is attached
to maroos
soomra
my body is in your fort
my soul in those shanties
(286/12)

a needle
with an emperor
i cannot compare

it clothes
the naked but remains
fully bare

it's qualities
cannot be appreciated
in this life
(286/14)

always in her mind
lighting up the soul
a tryst as old as eternity

today or tomorrow
marui will die
submerged
in the memory of her maroos
(287/1)

before dawn
they fetch water
from the deep wells
animals quench their thirst
women fill buckets
laughing and sharing tales
while the lazy ones look on

this poor girl
was kidnapped from
that place

(288/10)

this separation
gnaws my soul
torment my constant companion
taunts and tensions everywhere
here in soomra's palace
there in the village

(289/17&18)

contented
the maroos build homes
whenever it rains
wherever the grass grows
the scene unfolds before my eyes
i thirst for your love
have you forgotten my tears
my plight?
i thirst for one sip
that sip
is better than these
over-flowing cups
(290/1&2)

the camel man has arrived
with auspicious tidings

do not forget your spouse
your loi and your honour
says latif

in a few days
the winds of change
will free you from this fortress
(292/4&5)

how can my friends be angry?
were they to see my shabby hair
my dark circled eyes
they would appreciate my loyalty
(293/10)

as long as there is self-respect

i shall not live here

the oyster lives in the sea

never in river water

it looks up to the clouds

my mind longs for maleer

(293/12)

living in the sea

oysters shun salt water

waiting for a sweet drop

from the clouds above

reaching high

it produces a pearl

(293/14)

friends

adopt the oyster's virtuous ways

surrounded by sea

it still

looks up for rain

(294/15)

at last
the envoy from maleer comes
messenger
i pray for your well-being
may your feet be smeared with dust
dust of maleer is musk for me
(295/1to3)

blessed were those days in prison
seperation shattered
my soul
torrents of tears purified it
(295/8)

clad in rags
she won over maroos
she did not barter huts for palaces
preferring jungles
over landscaped gardens
may the lord always protect us
says latif
(295/Waee)

Sur Khambhat



the pathway
to my beloved is moonlit
let us reach there camel
before others awake
those in the mind's eye
are never far away
(38/7&8)

moon you are
no match for my beloved
by the fourteenth day
your splendour fades
you wax and wane
he shines always
(38/12)

a hundred suns
and a thousand moons
may rise
without you
my beloved
darkness looms wide
(38/13)

moon
may you become
a thin stark line again
may darkness prevail
lovers wish to meet
(39/16)

moon
the truth
i reveal to you now
you have neither eyes nor nose
you do not compare
to my beloved's visage
(39/17)

moon
the truth
i reveal to you now

your face
occasionally becomes
a line
at other times
a quarter
(39/18)

when my beloved
raised amorous eyes
the sun paled
moon faded

stars surrendered
diamonds and pearls
lost their splendour
(39/19)

moon
enter the courtyard
touch his feet
convey my message
in whispers
(41/5)

camel
can you pick up speed?
tonight i must reach
forget the thorny weeds
i'll feed you sandalwood
(42/15)

camel
can you run and leap?
do not shame your pedigree
prove your worth
do me a good turn
(43/17)

camel
i'll adorn your neck
with silk and rubies
i'll decorate your reins with gold
if you reach tonight
(43/20)

fetters and chains
fail to restrain
the camel feasts on thorny weeds

lord
cure him with your grace
this animal is a disgrace
(44/32&33)

nine chains
ten shackles
fifteen straps
to restrain the mind
yet
it sprints towards
the beloved
(45/39&40)

Sur Poorab



crow
convey my affection
bow before the loved ones

crow
kindly enquire
about their well-being
(435/1)

fly to my loved ones
give my salaams
bring back their message

i'll adorn your wings
with gold
(436/8)

crow
take my heart
i'll cut and give it to you
perhaps the loved ones will ask
who offers this sacrifice?
(436/12)

perched on the tree
the crow caws
my loved one sends a message
let me listen
stop this noise
(436/14)

my mind soars
the aroma of spring
and musk
surely comes from my lord
crow
what is the good news?
(437/19)

my prayers answered
wishes fulfilled
this creature brings
favourable tidings
thank you crow
thank you
lord
(437/20)

be it to

a

dog

or

a

crow

i offer my head

a hundred times over

for just one message

from the loved one

(438/28)

Sur Karayal



higher and higher
skyward it soars
far away from cranes
towards its beloved
towards the lake

god is one

with these words
it passed the test of birds
with flying colours

(443/1&2)

swans
plunge deep within
to taste of pure ecstasy

cranes
hover around the banks
skimming shallow waters

(443/4&5)

cranes
stomp through puddles
making them muddy

swans
steer clear
ashamed to be there
(443/7)

once
with swans
forever
with swans
never again
befriending cranes
(444/12)

swan
beware of
bird-catchers
at the lake
fifty of them
target a single bird
god help that poor soul
riding the waves
(445/17&18)

not of flesh'n bone
a fake of wood'n grass
lured the swans
to death's jaws
(445/19&20)

in deep water
the lotus is rooted
way above
flies the bee

lovers meet
against all odds
such is love's reach
(445/22)

lotus stays rooted
the buzzing bee wanders

love unites
they drink relentlessly
yet the thirst remains
(445/23)

swans alight
settle for the night

fragrance
fills the lake

pure
serene
unsoiled
(446/27)

songs and dances
come to an end
peacocks perish

swans migrate
leaving behind crafty cranes
in the polluted lakes
(446/28to30)

Sur Dahar



kanda

tell me about bygone times
about those cattle owners
who sat beneath your shade

how did you pass
those difficult days?

since the masters have left
your verdure has lost its lustre

flowers fall
blossoms fade

(455/1to4)

fatty fish

why did you not return
when the rivulet was full?

now trapped in the shallow
you hang from the fisherman's hook

(456/11)

allah
the great
you fill me with hope
my creator
your bounty is limitless
your name resonates in my soul
(458/18)

lord
i marvel at your ways
you can drown leaves
cause stones to float
an honour it will be
if you visit this sinner's abode
(458/19)

allah
great is your name
so is my request for mercy
need i say more?
you can read my mind
(459/23)

i am
naked and exposed
cover me
provider of shelters
do not break your ties
with this humble one

your name
is my solace
(459/24&25)

masters are many
my lord
you are kindness itself
though aware of my faults
you overlook them
(460/5&6)

ignoring the master
you celebrate with others
foolish woman
why collect husk
and leave the grain
behind?
(460/7)

not dew drops
of dawn
tears of the night
are these
lamenting the plight
of the afflicted
(461/16)

foolish one
you abandoned the lord
for the sake of the world

attracted to the froth
you allowed the milk to spill
(461/20)

laakha
i am a destitute old woman
under your protection once
we odes built abodes
in your care
we leave our huts now

our temples
and possessions
have been razed to dust
(466/48)

worn out baskets in hand
spades slung over shoulders
the poor odes migrate
says latif
(446/51)

Sur Sohini



During the reign of Shah Jahan, a village potter named Tulla lived on the banks of a river with his beautiful daughter Sohini.

Tulla was so talented that even the king patronized his art.

One day a wealthy trader from Iran, Izzat Beg, came to Gujarat, saw Sohini and instantly fell in love with her. Beg's love was reciprocated and in order to see Sohini, he frequented her father's shop and purchased pots in dozens which he disposed off at cheaper prices. He ended up bankrupt and was forced to approach Tulla, who hired him and entrusted him with the job of taking the buffaloes for grazing. Izzat Beg came to be known as Mehar.

Sohini and Mehar would meet secretly, and when the potter came to know about it, he got his daughter married to Dam, a young man from his own community. Mehar, after losing his job settled on the other bank of the river, Chenab. When Sohini came to know about this, she used to leave her husband at night to meet Mehar and return early morning.

Unfortunately Mehar fell ill, and became an invalid. Sohini with the help of a baked matka, used to cross the currents to meet her lover. On return, she used to hide the matka in the bushes. However, this could not remain a secret for long and, one night, her in-laws secretly substituted the baked matka for an unbaked one. The next day, when Sohini reached mid-stream, the matka gave way and she began to call out to Mehar for help. Mehar heard her call and jumped into the river. However, he was too weak to help her and they both drowned.

still a rivulet
the river yet to surge
friends in the comfort
of four walls
wallow not in love
a glimpse of my sahar
and never will you hold me back
matka in hand you will submerge
(79/3)

those who got a glimpse
abandoned their homes
and husbands
even without matkas
in the whirlpool they swirled
(79/5)

women crowd banks
longing for sahar
some fear life

others stage a pretence
he comes to those
who take the plunge
(80/9)

crows perched on trees
listen to mulla's prayers
while on a matka she moves
to her lover's abode
(80/10)

beseeching god's help
sohini journeys on a matka
ornaments sink
sharks
crocodiles encircle
whales threaten
to tear limbs apart
(81/15)

with its support
i saw
my love's face
i cannot
let the matka go
dearer than life
it is to me
(81/16)

the matka cracks
but it does not matter
a veil it was
a screen

my
every vein
echoes a song
my gaze set on him
i swim unfazed
mehar guides me
(81/19&20)

leave your self behind
let love be your guide

you will cross
the roaring river
in a short while
(82/26)

for those who love
the matka is a burden
for those who seek mehar
the river is a dry bed
(83/32)

mehar
is
sohini
so is the river
an unfathomable mystery
(83/34)

she jumps in
to choose safe waters
is the route of impostors

those who love
take on the mighty river
(86/4)

the river heralds continuously
she answers the clarion call
in the darkness she plummets
into the icy water
(87/12)

people swim in summer
she delights in wintry waters
slipping into the crippling cold

how unfair the river
is to the lover
(88/17)

river
do not rush
and gush
at monsoon's end
your frenzy will ease
to the very bottom
your levels will recede
(88/19)

sohini
learn the lesson of shariat
stronger than the current of tariqat
is the flow of haqiqua
lovers are finally content in maarfat
(87/10)

come
help me mehar
the river flows furiously
my days stretch endlessly
whirlpool's deep
the bank's steep
twigs bob
the river meanders so
i have plunged in blindly

come
help me mehar
oh dark night
rescue me
guide me to the other side
the raging river unnerves
water surges
monster's gorge
i must cross these currents
my eyes seek you
only you
help help me mehar
(89/Waee)

i hear the bells
enchanting
intoxicating
the sweet language of lovers

sombre night
eddies
gorges
take me towards mehar
i cross the tumultuous river
listening to the tinkling bells
(90/1to3)

when remembrance itself
fuels existence
why seek union?
with every breath
my memory of mehar
soars
(90/6)

a sip of love
she thirsts for more

a sip of love
she craves for mehar

without him
is there existence?

(91/17)

none can restrain the other
let each one decide

i have entered mid-stream
a fire burns and mehar summons me

no one can stop me
let each one decide

(92/Waee)

fix your gaze on mehar
on him alone
you'll swim across
without a float

slipping away at midnight
crossing the raging river
returning at dawn

mind
have you lost yourself?
(94/5)

in this river itself
let me merge with mehar

he seems very far
he is really quite near

to meet him
is my sacred call
(94/7&8)

when the world's in repose
i close my eyes
thoughts overwhelm
other people's reproach
becomes my honour
(95/14)

driven by love
had she not entered the river
the world would have forgotten sohini
she would have died anyway
says latif
the drowning redeemed her
(95/15)

who am i?
why this whirlpool?
why these taunts?
no one takes the plunge
unless destiny wills it
sisters
my fate plays a hand
at this hour
(95/18)

between devil and the deep
if i stay away love torments

if i go the world damns me
if i break promises my body shudders

go go you must
let eyes race like feet

let not even a whimper be heard
alert none, rush ahead
(97/Waee)

Sur Dahar



you are invited by the lord

believe these words

wash

come sit

he will feed you

(468/1)

get rid of the thief

lurking within

make peace with the sultan

from his door

precious gifts will pour

(468/2)

heavenly wine
is the obstacle

conquer all
to meet the king
(468/3)

you are the crowned
monarch of philanthropists

your charity
many times more
than the size
of the begging bowls
at your door

(468/4)

samo calls
the afflicted
my distress will diminish
as soon as he rides by
who else protects
the poor?
(468/6&7)

do not wander here and there
build a secure shelter
he will come to you
make a prince of the pauper
one look from him
one word and all worries fade
(468/9)

i am full of flaws
i seek your protection
i have wasted my life
i seek your shelter
you know me inside out
i seek your presence
i yearn for holy madeena
says sayyad
(470/Waee)

raahu
your praise is sung
across continents and seas
you provide horses for pedestrians
you accept all
without creed or caste
(472/10)

if pleased
he fills coffers
if displeased
he still fills coffers
(473/16)

none compares to you
my king
your generosity pours like rain
eighteen thousand haatims
are put to shame
(474/5)

if you desire anything
go to king
why degrade your self
before others?
minstrels
overcome worries at his door
(474/6)

he singles out
the needy
king samo calls
paupers to his door
and showers benediction
(474/9)

Sur Barvo



like a reed crying out
when the grass is cut
my heart shrieks

physician
why do you continue
to brand my arm?

(385/2)

like the elephant's trunk
lying on the ground
my body prostrates before you
says latif

this is my way of reaching you
my lord

(385/5)

if you come just once
i'll touch your feet
spread my hair as a bedsheet

if you come just once
i'll serve you forever
(386/6)

my beloved
was it right
to bestow love on me
then slip away?
even if love was not conferred
was it right to slip away?
(386/10)

some are near
although far away
some are far
although near
we forget some soon
others we always remember
like the twisted horns
of a buffalo
my heart is entwined with you
(386/12)

people pray for wealth
i pray for a glimpse
of the beloved

i can sacrifice
the world for just one glimpse

even taking his name
comforts me
why ask for more?
(387/14)

sometimes
he closes doors
sometimes
he opens them
sometimes
i am not let in
sometimes
i am invited
sometimes
i long to hear him
sometimes
he shares secrets
such are the ways
of my master
(387/18)

do me a favour
lord
a favour
equal to your greatness
will it be too much for you
to look at me just once?
(389/1)

like a blacksmith
my beloved
has chained my soul
to him
(389/5)

when my beloved
graciously steps out
earth utters his name
and kisses his feet
astonished fairies
stand by reverently
my beloved
is beauty personified
(389/6)

why have so many friends
when one will do?
only weather cocks
wander from door-to-door
surrender your heart
to one alone
to the envy of all
(392/7&8)

where have you learnt
this butcher's trade?

beloved
having a sharp knife
you pierce me
with a blunt one

see my wounds
they bleed and bleed
with stabs
(392/10)

Moomal Rano



In the fifteenth century, Raja Nand ruled in Mirpur Mathelo in Sindh. He had nine daughters of which Moomal was the most beautiful and Soomal the cleverest. Due to Moomal's folly, one day Raja Nand lost all his wealth. In a rage, he wanted to kill her but Soomal intervened assuring her father compensation for the loss.

Moomal was renowned for her beauty and many princes sought her hand. Soomal decided to cash in on this. She had a magnificent palace constructed on the banks of the river Kaak in Ludano and named it Kaak Mahal. It was full of mirages: the shallow waters surrounding it appeared to be very deep: ferocious roaring of lions was heard at the entrance, inside there were scented flowers with lush gardens to lure the visitors. In the bedroom were seven inviting beds. All looked alike except that six of them had ditches below instead of a mattress! The palace had labyrinth-like pathways and visitors were often accosted by thieves. Overall, the atmosphere was both mesmerizing and ominous.

An announcement was made: any man who succeeded in reaching Moomal inside the Kaak Mahal would win her hand in marriage.

Many rich people and princes came to try their luck only to find themselves looted. Some even lost their lives. The wealth thus obtained was returned to Raja Nand by his daughter, Soomal.

Rano was a minister in Hamir Soomro's kingdom. He was also married to the King's sister. One day, when he was hunting with his companions he heard of Kaak Mahal from a yogi and decided to go there. While others had failed, Rano was quick to recognize

the sorcery and overcame all obstacles. He won Moomal's hand in marriage. King Hamir was annoyed at his son-in-law and when Rano returned, he kept him under house arrest.

During Rano's absence, Moomal longed for him and sent many messages. After Rano assured the king that he would never go to Moomal again, he was freed. However one evening he slipped away and reached Kaak Mahal at midnight. There, to his dismay, he found Moomal sleeping with a young bearded man who resembled him! Actually it was Soomal dressed as Rano. Moomal had requested her sister to dress like him.

The agitated Rano left hastily leaving his walking stick behind. In the morning, when Moomal awoke, she recognized the stick. To clear the misunderstanding, she sent messengers imploring Rano to return, but he refused.

Quite desperate now, she rented a house near Rano, and dressed as a man, befriended him. They would often play chess together. One day, Rano spotted a birthmark on her arm and she was exposed. Moomal not being able to bear losing him again, jumped into the pyre. This news reached Rano and realizing her true love, he too jumped into the fire. The two were united in death.

In this allegory, Moomal represents a soul, who even after meeting God and receiving divine grace distracts herself with false idols.

come langotia
why shed red tears?

has the beauty
of these belles bewitched you?
has the sight of the gujar woman
left you spellbound?

(247/1)

with eyes like diamonds
elite and commoners alike
moomal cuts to size

eyes like daggers
with one look
she slaughters

that woman
kills
ferocious hunters

that woman
shoots
royal princes

scholars and ascetics
both have fallen prey

(247/4to6)

let us go to kaak
where love abounds
where beauty prevails everywhere

let us go to kaak
where cauldrons of love simmer
lotus
chandan and fruits are found
where eyes feast on virgins
(247/8to10)

the camel is thin
his gait swift
he'll reach kaak's banks
faster than a bird
(248/13)

clothes like pink roses
shawls like green leaves
hair scented with chameli
chandan sprinkled over bodies
damsels adorn themselves in jewels
moomal rejoices
sodho has wed me
(249/1&2)

lovers
coloured with the red earth
of kaak
wander about ludaano
shedding tears of blood
nothing can wash away
colours of love
pining for their beloved
they lie longingly
(250/4&5)

she
who struck others
herself struck
by the arrow

she
who wounded others
herself wounded
by mendhro
(250/9)

mendhro's arrow is like no other

no other like rano

since he left ludaano

latif says

she talks about him alone

day and night

its rano rano

(250/10&11)

my lord
my priceless possession
i accept your silent taunts
my wounds bleed
please return to the one
you have vanquished
(251/20&21)

throughout the night
i have lit candles
now dawn appears

mendhro
please return
i am dying
surely the crows
have delivered my message?
(252/1)

waiting
shedding tears
night dissolves
stars vanish
the sun comes up
(252/2)

lamps filled with scented oil
i kept the wick steady
they burned
till the cock crowed

traveller
why did you not return?
many messages were sent
with the crows
(252/3&4)

only three stars shine
weary constellations yawn
walls crack and colours fade

i feel life
slipping away
humiliated heart
where is sodho
how to live without him?
(253/4to6)

you have married a lion
cage your emotions
a rain cloud carries
its own burden

do not flaunt your beauty
keep your mind on rano
on judgement day
you will remember sodho

(254/1)

keep
your gaze steady
or
face a fall

dust to dust we all go
today or tomorrow

(254/2&3)

kaak on fire
the palace ablaze
ludaano burns

my body sizzles
i am only half alive

he came and left
leaving his stick behind

love
do not leave me in the lurch
do not leave me half dead
(255/12to14)

rano
kindly shoot me
your arrow-like eyes
will end my stupor

pity me sodho
i sleep on pillows wet with tears
my relatives taunt
wealth stifles

return rano
return
(257/5&6)

if mendhro comes to me
i'll immolate my ego
set my home on fire
severe all connections
(258/13)

friends convey the message to my beloved one
flowers spread on the bed faded yesterday
i'll soon be dead
relieve me of this distress says latif
friends convey this message to my loved one
(259/Waee)

like a boat
i am anchored to rano

my being drifts
i cannot sleep
i cannot sit
i can only weep
(262/16)

you turned this cheap metal
to pure gold
you overlooked my flaws
my beloved sodho
(263/8)

beloved sodho
your restraint puts me to shame
without a knife you have cut my nose
at times
those who speak not a word
gain respect
(264/13&14)

an ascetic appeared
darkness disappeared

his full-moon face
lit up the land

(266/1&2)

last night
a message heard never before
last night
a divine message from rano

says latif
he cares not for caste or creed
accepting all who need him

(266/5)

where should i turn my camel?
all around is radiance
magnificent gardens everywhere
in kaak and ludaano

rano everywhere
everywhere rano

(266/6&7)

Sasui Punhoon



The following surs are based on this folk tale.

Sasui was born in a brahmin family but was abandoned by her parents because her horoscope predicted that she would wed a Muslim. Placed in a box, she was left to float down the river. Mohammed, a childless washerman living in Bhambore, found her and named her Sasui which means “moon” and brought her up.

Sasui grew to be a charming young woman and many men wanted to marry her. Prince Punhoon, son of Ari Jaam, ruler of Ketch in Baluchistan, had heard of her and decided to go to Bhambore in the guise of a vendor of musk and other perfumes.

Punhoon and Sasui fell in love at first sight. Mohammed did not agree to this match as Punhoon was not a washerman. Punhoon, being a prince, had never washed a single cloth in his life and when he tried to do so, he tore not only his skin, but tore the clothes as well. Sasui advised him to put gold coins in the pockets of the clothes so that the owners would not complain! When no one spoke against Punhoon’s washing skills, Mohammed agreed to their marriage. King Ari Jaam was appalled and sent many messengers to his son who refused to return without his wife.

Punhoon’s brothers decided to kidnap him. On camels, they arrived in Bhambore where they were heartily welcomed. A grand feast was arranged in their honour with drinks, food, dance and merriment. Women were excluded from the celebrations and while Sasui slept, the brothers got Punhoon drunk and departed hastily to Ketch taking him with them.

In the morning, when Sasui awoke and realized that Punhoon had been kidnapped, she decided to follow them much against the advice of her parents and friends. Following the camel's tracks, she crossed treacherous mountains and scorching deserts. When she reached Morbar Hills, a shepherd tried to molest her. Sasui prayed to God and the earth split to protect her. Sasui disappeared inside leaving just the hem of her garment on top. The shepherd realized that she was a saintly soul and made a shrine at the place.

When Punhoon came to his senses, he hastened to Bhambore, this time with the permission of his father. As he retraced Sasui's steps, he met the shepherd who related the entire story. Punhoon also prayed to God and a wide chasm appeared into which he disappeared. The two lovers were united forever in death.

In this spiritual allegory, the seeker in search of God often faces setbacks sometimes due to his own shortcomings. He has to be ever alert; Sasui lost Punhoon partly due to her negligence: she fell asleep during the celebrations. However, a true seeker, such as Sasui, continues the journey despite all hurdles to ultimately reach her goal.

Sur Kahori



negligent one
shamelessly you slumbered
through the night
they rode away with the baggage

simpleton
why did you not run
and stop the caravan?

(187/3)

lax one
did you not hear
the camels grunt?
how can those who sleep
away the hours
meet the beloved?
asks latif

(187/6)

mountain
you have shared my plight
my lover has taken flight

weep with me
curse my fate
(190/8&9)

mountain
your body heats up
what can you do?
your limbs are of stone
mine of steel
fate has willed it so
(191/18)

for good or bad
i am baroach's slave girl
forever with punhoon
how can i forget the ketchis?
i'm unfit
even for their shoes
(192/8)

punhoon's reflection
a desert cloud
under which i proceed
punhoon's reflection
a taste of ecstasy
i accept my turmoil gracefully
(195/11&12)

even if a fraction of my story were told
animals and people would be silenced
hillocks would fall apart
mountains would burn
(196/6)

how can i weep for love?
i have forgotten
to weep

i can only raise my hands
wet with tears
and continue my journey
(198/1)

even deserts delight
to see those who burn inside
with love
love guides seekers of truth
though the squint eyed see three
all is one
(198/7)

Sur Hussaini



sun
do not set
till i have seen
my baroach

sun
i cannot die
till i have seen
his footprints
(201/5)

the sun has set
my kith and kin have left
mother
i am dying
in this darkness
(201/9)

i wish they had seen me in this condition
facing a steep and stormy path

i wish they had seen me in this condition
talking to every tree trying to find punhoon

i wish they had seen me in this condition
my heart bleeding like a pomegranate flower

i wish they had seen me in this condition
they'd have gifted me trucks instead of ornaments
(202/Waee)

the earth is scorching
my heart bleeds

mother
caught in these fires
i burn
as i walk on and on
(203/1)

the fire of love
hovers over my head
come near
to see how painful it is
(203/2)

perspiration dripped
i thought it to be
the rain of love
alas it turned
out to be merely
the lava of love
(203/3)

mother
if my soul forgets sajan
may hot winds scorch me
may i die like the babiho of thar
(203/4)

burn
burn
while there's life in you
hot or cold
no time for idling
if darkness overcomes
you'll lose sight of the footprints
says latif
(204/17&18)

foolish bhambore
failing to recognize the aryani
to follow punhoon

there are those
who see with the inner eye
search the beloved out
even when he hides

(206/9&10)

when i go out
he leaves ketch
when i stay in
he is within me

to look outwards
was a mistake

friends i found baroach
without taking a step

(208/11&12)

boulders are my bed
rocks my cradle
on a mattress-like mountain i lie
pass the night with animals
who are now
my family
(209/5)

why get entangled with outsiders?
why marry an alien prince?
you have lost your mind sasui

you senseless brahmin girl
did you think loving baroach
was easy?
(210/8)

separation
is better than union
after the meeting
my love kept me at bay
(210/11)

come
separation
this union
has become a veil
all my wounds have healed
i have lost the pleasure of pain
(210/12)

suffering
led to the path of love

grief
guided her to hote
(211/2)

grief
my body quivers
like salt dissolving in water

grief
my companion stay
do not go sajan's way

grief
i'll never tire of you
leave me only after i have met hote

my sorrow never abates
like a water wheel in motion
(211/6to8)

all bear
some burden of sorrow
i carry a full load

i seek out
sellers of sorrow
but most have left
the marketplace
(213/21)

grief
my garland of happiness
in your pleasurable company
my beloved comes to me
(213/24)

when i weep
it feels like play
when i laugh
my heart burns

eyes
why did you not shed tears of blood?
why did you allow my beloved
to depart?

no rest till he returns
(219/8&9)

do not incinerate
what already burns
extinguish it for a while
like a blacksmith does
(219/13)

death will come one day
may i die following his path

then he alone
will be responsible
for my death
(220/20)

seeker
do not be disheartened
i'm never far away
though it might seem so sometimes
our destination is the same
(224/24)

wandering and yearning sasui died
lord of ketch became her pall bearer
buried at punhoon's feet
she was immortalized
(226/11)

Sur Desi



stop or i'll die

do not drive away the camel

dear husband

please visit my shanty

your absence

marks my day of judgement

(163/1)

it was fated

my brother-in-law

camels and hillocks

would all bring sorrow

as i followed punhoon's footprints

(163/3)

sasui

when camels entered the courtyard
why did you not tie them with your hair
why did you fall asleep?

(163/5)

even if my husband's kin are dishonest
my luck may not turn for the worst

can this poor wretch
defy the decree of fate?

(164/11)

kinship should be with natives
how can strangers be trusted?
they prefer their own soil

without my loved one
i must abandon bhamboore

(164/12)

mighty camel men
why do you torture me?

this brahmin girl
has no companion except baroach
our ties can never be severed

(164/12)

camels
their drivers and his kin
are all my enemies

wind
the fourth
blowing away punhoon's footprints

sun
the fifth
setting too early

hillocks
the sixth
with their rocky terrain

moon
the seventh
rising extremely late

in the dawn i hurry on
criss-crossing
mountain passes
(166/27)

caravans have arrived
from ketch
i'll smear my body with their dust
a slave girl i'll become
please take me
(171/7)

caravans have arrived
from ketch
i'll make reins with my tresses
i'll sew the saddle with my hair
punhoon's caravan is as dear as he
(171/11)

those wretched camel men
abandoned me in the wilderness
had i known
i would have burnt their saddles
whipped their camels
(172/17)

this distressed woman
has no kin in ketch or bhambore
says latif

no force will work on habib
except a heartfelt plea
(176/18)

hote helps the helpless
you need not lose hope

he may come down
the hillock any minute
says latif
(177/5)

those cruel mountains
reach for the clouds

i walk barefoot
on the foothills

come
help me
(178/12)

torturous
are these mountains
i fall
i shriek
may my cries reach his ears
i will respond to his demands
(179/1)

love required me to keep awake
i dozed off
i floundered
punhoon came
and left
love and laziness
never compatible
(181/15)

to live in bhambore
is like taking poison

i am smitten
my being belongs to hote
you advice me not to go
how can i obey you
my sisters?

(182/1)

i am weak
i cannot work or sleep
sajan
send me a salaam at least
out of mercy
think of me in vindur
(183/6)

atlast
his fragrance
reaches the mountains
spreads over land and trees
bhambore sizzles
silk robes shimmer
palaces and homes glitter
mother
this slave girl's grief
vanishes
punhoon has arrived
in ketch
(183/8&9)

Sur Aabri



be it
the beginning
or the end
proceed i must

god
let not love's labour
be lost
(115/1)

overwhelmed by bouts of pain
sasui crushes pain itself
punhoon's memory haunts

like a true lover
she dies
a hundred deaths
(115/2)

love suffocates
sasui does not retreat
she drinks the nectar
her thirst remains unquenched
more she drinks
more the thirst
(115/3)

one who drinks
from the brook of beauty
gets drunk with intense pain
even in mid-stream
the thirst remains
(115/4)

drink
drink another cup
let the thirst escalate
give me a cupful of thirst
with your own hands
punhoon
let me quench my thirst
with thirst
(115/5)

living on the river bank
dunces die of thirst
closer than the beloved
is their breath
yet the ignorant
wail like fools
(116/9)

sasui
with penury as your companion
love's frenzy as your guide
journey towards ketch

cross mountains
accept tribulations
avoid deliberations
beware of azazeel
your goal will draw near
(117/12&13)

do not revel in joy
or wallow in grief
do not speak lies
or tell truths
do not stay in bhamboore
or step out
do not fear death
or love life
(117/14&15)

turn your gaze
outwards
to
inwards
sajan
is
just
a glance away
(118/2)

sasui
your journey has just begun
punhoon left ages ago
do not look for him
in the desert
take the route of those
who never move out
(120/1)

why drift in the wilderness?
baroach is not far beyond
says latif

only imposters set out
on long journeys to ketch
how should i reach ketch?
tell me poet

with your heart
full of ecstasy
says latif
(121/16)

love is your
eternal twin
precious as musk
inseparable from the soul
never let it go
(121/1to3)

those with fleeting desire
halt mid-way
those afraid of affliction
go astray
a formidable task
my friend
come if you're ready
to sacrifice life itself
(122/1to3)

do not forbid me
mother
a wandering ascetic
i want to be
ears pierced
clad in yogi's robes
(123/10)

i am a helpless woman
punhoon
keep your pledge
your word
keeps me going
(123/13)

before pointing
a finger at him
keep your word first
says latif

a hundred promises
he may make
a hundred promises
he may break

what can you do?
such is the way of love
(123/14)

my feet
sore with blisters
my eyes
brimming with tears
exhausted
i pray for him
how can i curse my love?
god please help him
(124/19)

let death come
mother
i will not return home

i'll perish
following his footprints
(124/24)

diving deep within
i conversed with him

no mountains to cross
no need to reach ketch

i myself was punhoon

only as sasui
did I feel grief
(125/2)

a veil it was
a screen
she herself became punhoon
says latif
she took the journey heroically
crossed vindur
here and now
(125/4&5)

i lost
my self
i found
him
i was punhoon
all knowledge is futile
such delusion one suffers
until you meet him
(126/8)

to see his grandeur
surrender the self
observe his beauty everywhere
make it your goal
to be with him forever
(126/11)

why search everywhere?
nearer than your breath is he
just remove the screen
between you and him
(126/13)

martyrs of love
need no shrouds

sasui enjoys a magnificent place
in the realm of martyrdom
(128/6)

kindle the spark
already there
allow the blaze
to rise

exist in
non-existence
(132/17)

sasui awake
stared at izraeel
as if he were a messenger from punhoon
when munkar and naheer appeared
she asked them
did you see my beloved's caravan?
(134/8&9)

this route
this path
these stones
the poor women followed
her shrieks echoed in the mountains

sasui
the world applauds
you dared to tread
the tracks of the sardar
(135/14)

move on and on
never retracing your steps
even if you fail to find him
derive joy from the journey itself
says latif
(136/2)

wind
do not erase these footprints
they guide me

storm
these footprints i entrust to you
do not let me down
(136/3)

exhausted
sasui took the next step
with that one step
she leaped over the mountain
(136/8)

lend a ear to the ketchis
hear them speak their riddles
in total silence
be with them
love will grow
(140/1)

lend a ear to the ketchis
set your own bugle aside
fathom their message
hear their frequent calls
(140/2)

friend
sometimes become all mouth
sometimes all ears
sometimes a knife
sometimes a goat
says latif
(140/5)

i am a blind woman
aari's eyes are my eyes
the trees along the road
guide me to his abode
to his shining face
(140/9)

call not
without the urge to call
walk not
without the urge to walk
burn not
without the urge to burn
weep not
without the urge to weep
(140/11)

Sur Maazoori



only false lovers tire
searching for punhoon
for true lovers
mountains turn to plateaus

brahmin girl
be ready
to sacrifice your flesh
as feast for the dogs of ketch
(147/1)

my relationship
with the beloved
is known to the world
otherwise who would care
for this slim brahmin girl?
none would have recognized
her anywhere in the world
(148/13)

friends
become naked
leave behind
your greed

the beloved never meets
the idle or lazy
(149/3)

burdened with possessions
you'll find him
far

lightened with nothingness
you'll find him
near
(149/7)

kill the mule
with the dagger of nothingness
says sayyad
cast off desires
walk carefree
(149/8)

mountain
do not rise higher
or shed tears
lest i lose my trail

tree
do not grow taller
i need to climb you
to see his footprints
(151/6&7)

let a million thorns pierce
let my feet be cut by stones
i shall never wear shoes

only those
who love their feet
wear shoes
says sayyad

sasui
sacrifices all comforts
disregards all customs
for her beloved
(152/10&11)

die
before you live
heed this advice
enjoy the fruits of existence
(153/1)

die and triumph
give up doubts
do not turn back my friend
even if the footprints
are not visible
the journey itself is paradise
(153/4)

death cannot claim those
who die before their death
life renders death worthless
for those who truly live life
(154/7)

life
go cage others
do not bother me

death
i'll follow you
till eternity
(154/10)

helpless one
use your head and mind
not just hands and feet

search for him
till you are alive

thousands
of loved ones exist
but none equals punhoon
(155/1&2)

stroll leisurely
or stride rapidly
even an iota of your destiny
will not change

friends
carry on courageously
whatever is decreed
will take place
(155/7&8)

if i scream loudly
people call me mad

let them

i want my shrieks to be heard
across distant lands

(156/12&13)

i cannot control myself
tomorrow's promises be damned

meet me
this very moment
or
kill me
this very moment

my beloved
(157/1)

sasui
an instant
with punhoon
is worth more
than many years
with any one else
(158/10)

the reed cut from the tree bleeds
sasui remembers her dear ones
rain lashes the mountains
but for her
the drought continues
everything is in the lord's hands
we can just lift ours in prayer
(159/19&20)

GLOSSARY

Aaari	:	Refers to Punhoon, prince of Ketch.
Aadesi	:	Yogi.
Aasaa	:	A morning raag of Hindustani music, belonging to the Aasaweri Thaat.
Alakh	:	One who cannot be perceived by senses.
Aryani	:	A lowly person.
Azazeel	:	A fallen angel who disobeyed God.
Babiho	:	A desert bird.
Baloach	:	Resident of Baluchistan.
Beedo	:	Red thread tied during marriage ceremony.
Bheri	:	A big kettle drum.
Bilwal	:	A raag sung in the first quarter of the day.
Bird	:	The bird is symbolic of the soul in many eastern religious traditions.
Camel	:	Symbolic of the fickleness of the human mind.
Cranes	:	Representative of worldly people, while swans symbolize the ascetic.
Crow	:	In Sindh, this bird was considered to be a messenger.
Dahar	:	Once a prosperous desert valley near the Indus river; it dried up forcing the locals to migrate.
Dargah	:	Holy shrine of a saint.
Dasara	:	Refers to King Chanesar.

Desi	: A morning raag belonging to the Aasaweri Thaata.
Doha	: A two-line verse with a definite rhyme and rhythm structure.
Dohag	: Bad luck of separation from husband.
Fakir	: One who renounces.
Gorakhnath	: A saint.
Haatim	: Merciful person.
Habib	: Loved one.
Haqiqat	: Ultimate reality, truth.
Hashmi	: Benevolent king, who lived before Shah Latif's time.
Hinglaj	: A place of pilgrimage.
Hoories	: It is believed that the doer of good deeds enters heaven, where beautiful women serve cups of wine.
Hote	: Beloved.
Hussein	: A raag belonging to the Carnatic music.
Ishk	: Intense divine love that expels all worldly desires from heart.
Izraeel	: Angel of death.
Jaajik	: Musician who sings for money.
Jaam	: Refers to King Chanesar.
Janio	: Sacred thread of the Hindus.
Kaatib	: Writer.
Kafir	: Non-believer.
Kalma	: Holy verses.
Kalyan	: A raag sung late in the evening in both Hindustani and Carnatic music.

Kanda	: A thorny shrub with yellow flowers that dotted the Sindh landscape.
Kamode	: A soothing melody belonging to the Kalyan Thaatsung generally in the evening.
Karma	: The doctrine of transmigration of soul or reincarnation. A human being is freed from cycle of birth and death when action and reaction ceases.
Keenjhar	: A lake.
Ketch	: A city in Sindh.
Khambat	: Name of a port, also a melody.
Khori	: Wanderer in search of food, symbolizing the search for truth.
Laakha	: A strong man who protected women.
Lahutis	: Yogis.
Langotia	: Sanyasi.
Loi	: Garment made of coarse wool.
Madeena	: Holy place of the muslims.
Marifat	: The stage of revelation when the seeker gains spiritual knowledge
Mokhi	: Wine-seller. A symbol for Guru or Murshid who offers divine knowledge.
Munkar	: Angel who keeps account of our deeds and presents the same after death.
Murshid	: Spiritual guide or mentor.
Odes	: Inhabitants of Ketch who migrated due to adverse conditions.

Rabab	: A stringed instrument.
Ramkali	: A morning raag belonging to the Bhairav Thaata.
Rasaha	: Traveller.
Sahar	: Beloved.
Sajan	: Lover.
Samo	: King of Khambhat
Samudi	: Sea-farers.
Shariat	: Divine law.
Singhees	: Hollow horn used as a musical pipe.
Sri Raag	: An early evening raag belonging to Purvi Thaata.
Surando	: A musical instrument
Suttar	: One who clothes the naked.
Tariaqat	: Spiritual path of the sufis.
Urs	: Celebration during the death anniversary of a saint.
Vairaagis	: Yogis.
Vindur	: The mountain that Sasui crossed to reach Ketch.
Yaman Kalyan	: A late evening melody belonging to Hindustani music.

BIONOTES

Winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, **Hari Dilgir** was an eminent Sindhi poet and scholar. He edited many anthologies of poetry and received several literary awards like Gaurav Puruskar, Priyadarshini Award and Indusind Award for lifetime contribution to Sindhi language.

Born in Pune, **Anju Makhija** has spent several years in Canada. An MA in Media from Concordia University, Montreal, she has worked in the fields of education, training and television. She writes poetry, plays and has worked on audio-visual scripts. *All Together*, a multi-media production won her an award at the National Education Film Festival, California. She has participated and won prizes in poetry and playwriting competitions organized by The British Council, The Poetry Society of India and the BBC.

Padmashree Motilal Jotwani is a renowned sufi scholar and has to his credit many books in Sindhi, Hindi and English.

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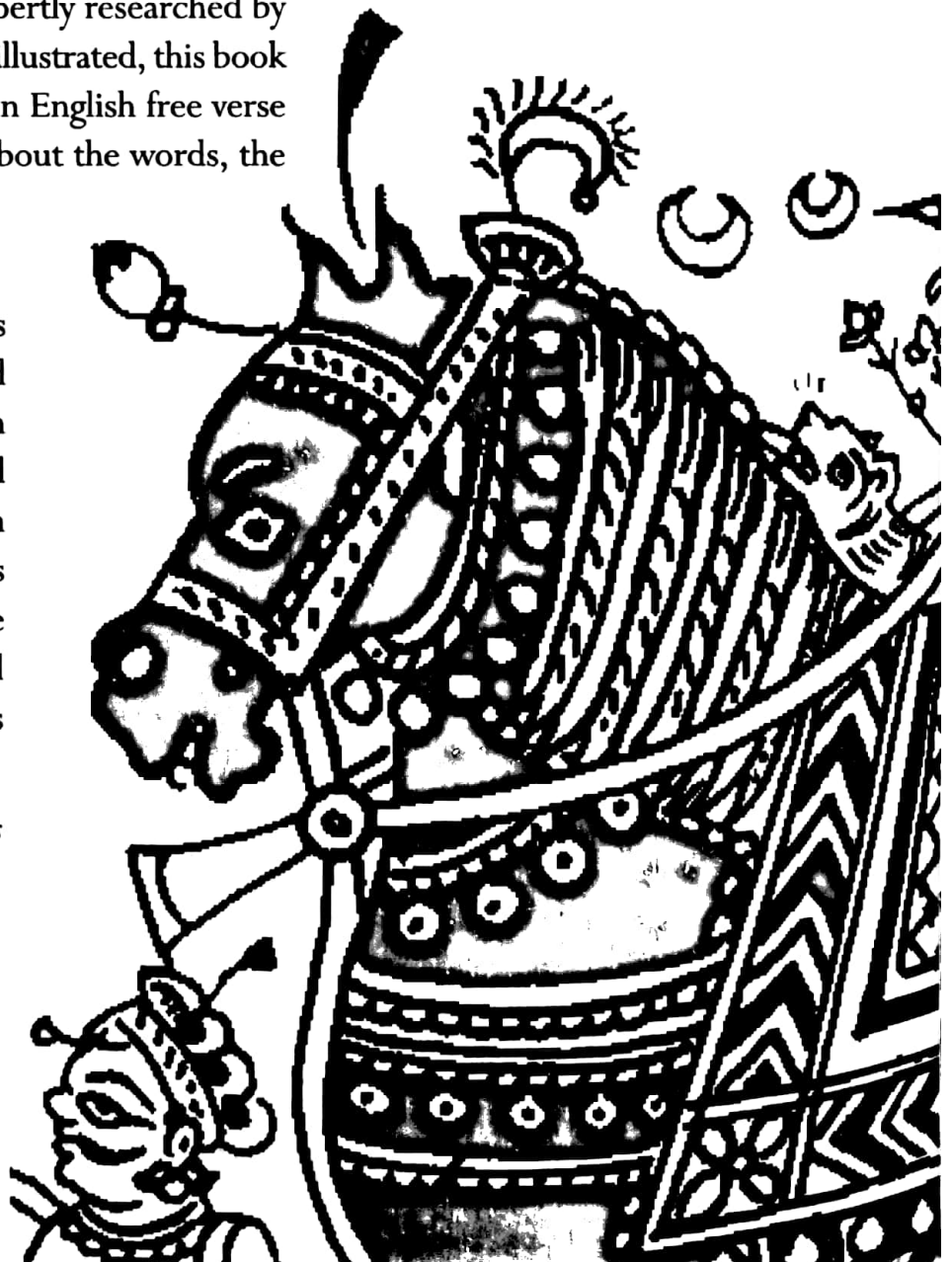
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nearer than your breath is he

just remove the screen
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